

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

UNCLAS STATE 172638

E.O. 11652, N/A

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: PISTOL SALE TO LEBANESE AGENT

FOR YOUR INFORMATION BELOW IS EXCERPT OF NOON PRESS
BRIEFING JULY 22 IN WHICH QUESTIONS WERE RAISED ABOUT THE
COMMERCIAL SALE OF 1400 PISTOLS TO LEBANESE AGENT:

BEGIN TEXT: Q: BOB, WHILE WE'RE DRIFTING AROUND THE
MIDDLE EAST, CAN YOU, ARE YOU NOW ABLE TO CONFIRM ALL THE
DETAILS OF JIM MCCARTNEY'S STORY IN KNIGHT NEWSPAPERS THAT
THE UNITED STATES APPROVED THE PRIVATE SALE OF GUNS TO A
BEIRUT ARMS DEALER AND ALL THE OTHER DETAILS THAT YOU KNOW
ARE IN JIM'S STORY?

A: WELL, THE ONLY THING THAT I CAN GIVE YOU THAT I'VE BEEN
ABLE TO GET SO FAR--AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE ABLE TO GET
ANYTHING ELSE--IS THE APPLICATION FOR THIS COMMERCIAL SALE
WAS RECEIVED IN LATE MARCH, AND, AFTER QUERRING THE
EMBASSY ABOUT THE PROPOSED SALE, APPROVAL WAS GRANTED TO
AUTHORIZE THE SHIPMENT ON MAY 8. THE ONLY ADDITIONAL
POINT I CAN GIVE YOU THAT I HAVE IS THAT THE PARTIES TO
THIS TRANSACTION WERE RECOGNIZED ESTABLISHED AGENTS IN
SUCH SALES.

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Q: THERE WAS JUST ONE AGENT, RIGHT, ONE ARMS DEALER?

A: THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING, YES.

Q: AND HE WAS A RECOGNIZED ARMS DEALER IS ALL YOU'RE
SAYING?

A: RECOGNIZED, ESTABLISHED AGENT IN SUCH SALES. NOW, IT WENT TO ONE AGENT IS MY UNDERSTANDING. NOW, WHETHER IT'S A COMPANY THAT HAS THREE-OR FOUR AGENTS AS PART OF THE SAME COMPANY I DON'T KNOW.

Q: CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE AGENT? IS THE AGENT SOGHANALIAN?

A: I WOULD HAVE TO CHECK TO CONFIRM THAT WAS THE MAN. I WOULD ASSUME THAT THAT IS THE AGENT, BUT I HAVENT GOT THAT.

Q: NOW, WAS THERE ONE SHIPMENT MADE ON MAY 8, AND ONE-- THE WHOLE DEAL WAS DONE IN ONE SHIPMENT?

A: NO, IT WAS THE APPROVAL WAS GRANTED TO AUTHORIZE THE SHIPMENT MAY 8.

Q: APPROVAL WAS MAY 8.

A: RIGHT. NOW, WHETHER THEY WERE ALL SHIPPED TOGETHER, ALL THE ARMS WERE SHIPPED AT THE SAME TIME OR IT WAS ALL ON MAY 8 I DO NOT KNOW. THE APPROVAL WAS GIVEN.

Q: ALL RIGHT, NOW, FROM WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE DEAL, WAS THERE SOME SORT OF--I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE WORD WOULD BE-- SAFEGUARD TO PREVENT OR TO STOP THE SHIPMENT SHOULD WE FIND OUT THE ARMS WERENT BEING USED THE WAY WE WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE USED? FOR INSTANCE, IF THEY WERE USED IN THE STREET FIGHTING IN BEIRUT.

A: I WOULD HAVE TO CHECK IT, BARRY.

Q: I'M SORRY, WHAT WAS THE STUFF, BOB?

A: I THINK IT WAS 1,400 PISTOLS, SOMETHING LIKE THAT. I HAVEN'T GOT A RUNDOWN OF THE WHOLE THING.
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Q: WHAT WAS THE USE? WHAT WERE THEY INTENDED FOR?

A: I DON'T KNOW.

Q: THEY WERE INTENDED FOR A PRIVATE DEALER IS WHAT HIS REPORT SAID THIS MORNING.

A: WELL, YES, THAT'S RIGHT. BUT I DON'T HAVE ALL THE DETAILS OF, YOU KNOW, WHAT THE END USE WOULD BE.

Q: IS THERE A RATIONALE FOR SELLING THAT MANY SMALL ARMS TO A PLACE THAT'S IN THE MIDDLE OF SUBSTANTIAL CIVIL DISORDER?

A: I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE RATIONALE WOULD BE FOR SUCH A THING, TO BE VERY FRANK WITH YOU.

Q: WHEN YOU SAY APPROVAL MAY 8, APPROVAL BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT, BY THE PENTAGON, OR BY WHOM?

A: WELL, IT'S THE MUNITIONS CONTROL OFFICE WHERE YOU HAVE TO GET AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXPORT OF ARMS.

Q: BUT THAT HAS TO BE APPROVED AT A HIGHER LEVEL, DOESN'T IT, THAN THE MUNITIONS CONTROL OFFICE? DOESN'T IT HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT?

A: I DON'T KNOW HOW HIGH IN THE DEPARTMENT IT EVEN WENT. BUT, YOU KNOW, ORDINARILY IN MANY MANY CASES THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUNITIONS CONTROL OFFICE CAN, I THINK HE HAS THE AUTHORITY TO APPROVE EXPORT LICENSES.

Q: WAS THE SECRETARY AWARE OF THIS SALE?

A: NO.

Q: WHAT'S A GOOD AMMUNITION OFFICER?

A: AS FAR AS I KNOW, HE WAS NOT AWARE.

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Q: HE WAS NOT AWARE?

Q: WHAT IS A GOOD AMMUNITION OFFICER?

A: I WILL HAVE TO CHECK IT. I DON'T KNOW.

Q: WHEN YOU--WHEN HE WAS ON THE PHONE, WAS HE REPRESENTING THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT?

A: I JUST DON'T KNOW.

Q: YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW.

Q: BUT, THE STORY SAYS THAT THE --

A: I DON'T KNOW. IF I CAN--ALL THESE DETAILED QUESTIONS--IF I CAN GET ANYTHING FURTHER -- (CARUTHESTEAD?) JUST CAME IN AND I WAS ABLE TO GET THIS MUCH BEFORE I CAME DOWN.

Q: THE STORY SAID THAT THE EMBASSY DESCRIBED THE DEALER AS "RELIABLE." IS THAT CORRECT?

A: I HAVE NOT CHECKED THE CABLE OR WHATEVER COMMUNICATION MIGHT HAVE COME IN FROM THE EMBASSY, BUT MY GUIDANCE SAID

THAT THE PARTIES TO THIS TRANSACTION WERE RECOGNIZED, ESTABLISHED AGENTS IN SUCH CASES. NOW WHETHER THAT IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING WHAT JIM HAD IN HIS STORY, I DO NOT KNOW, BARRY.

Q: DO YOU KNOW IF THE GUNS ENDED UP IN THE PHALANGES HANDS?

A: I DO NOT. NO.

Q: BOB, DO YOU KNOW, OR COULD YOU FIND OUT IN YOUR INQUIRIES, WHERE WE EXPECTED THESE GUNS TO GO IN THE FIRST PLACE? WERE THEY SUPPOSEDLY TO GO TO LEBANESE ARMY, LEBANESE POLICE, LEBANESE FACTIONS--WHERE WERE THEY SUPPOSED TO GO OTHER THAN TO THE ARMS DEALER, WHO WAS PROBABLY NOT GOING TO KEEP THEM IN HIS STOREHOUSE.

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A: LET ME FIND OUT WHAT I CAN. I WAS ASKED THIS QUESTION EARLIER, MARILYN, I JUST DO NOT HAVE IT.

Q: I JUST WANTED TO MAKE IT MORE EXPLICIT.

Q: WE PUT ALL THESE QUESTIONS, BY THE WAY, TO THE PRESS OFFICE AT A LITTLE AFTER 10:00 THIS MORNING. SO IF YOU HAVE ANY MORE ON THIS, CAN YOU POST IT FOR THOSE OF US WHO STAY AROUND IN THE AFTERNOON?

A: AND I WILL COME AROUND, ALSO, MYSELF. COME AROUND TO YOUR PRESS OFFICE.

Q: THE STORY, YOU KNOW, IS FROM THE BALTIMORE SUN.

A: YES, THAT'S RIGHT. I HAVE IT RIGHT HERE.

Q: BOB, JUST TO IDENTIFY CORRECTLY--THE AUTHORIZING AGENCY--THERE IS A STORY--WHERE IS THE MUNITIONS CONTROL BOARD? WHAT IS IT PART OF? IS IT AN INDEPENDENT?

A: NO. IT IS AN OFFICE HERE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT, OZZIE.

Q: IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT?

A: YES.

Q: AND IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT SATISFIED WITH THE DECISION NOW? IS IT PLEASED WITH THIS --

A: I JUST DO NOT WANT TO COMMENT ON IT, FRANKLY.

Q: IS THERE A REPRIMAND AT ISSUE TO WHOEVER MADE THE DECISION, OR TO THE EMBASSY FOR NOT COORDINATING IT?

A: NO, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO REPRIMAND HAS BEEN ISSUED. NO.

Q: IS THERE AN INQUIRY GOING ON NOW?

A: THERE IS NO INQUIRY GOING ON THAT I KNOW OF, NOW.

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Q: IS THE SECRETARY UNAWARE OF EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, OF ANY SORT, REALLY? I MEAN, HE HAS BEEN IN TIGHT CONTROL OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

A: IN ANSWER TO JOHN'S EARLIER QUESTION, I SAID, "AS FAR AS I AM AWARE," IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE OF THE 1,400 WEAPONS, I AM UNAWARE THAT THE SECRETARY WAS AWARE, BUT HE MAY --

Q: DOES HE WONDER WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE GOING ON THAT HE IS NOT AWARE OF?

A: HE VERY WELL MIGHT.

Q: BOB, DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS MEANT BY "RECOGNIZED ESTABLISHED AGENT?" DOES THAT MEAN AN AGENT THAT CAN SELL ARMS TO ANYONE, INCLUDING THE PLO'S?

A: I WOULD THINK THAT MY INTERPRETATION OF THAT WOULD BE "REPUTABLE." LET ME PUT IT THAT WAY.

Q: WELL, DO YOU MEAN HE PAYS HIS BILLS, OR HE--THE ARMS GO INTO THE RIGHT HANDS? I DON'T KNOW WHAT "REPUTABLE" MEANS.

A: I WOULD SAY PROBABLY BOTH, BUT PARTICULARLY THE LATTER, WHICH IS WHAT YOU ARE CONCERNED WITH MORE THAN PAYING HIS BILLS.

Q: DO YOU KNOW THE VALUE OF THIS DEAL?

A: I WILL GET THAT FOR YOU.

Q: ALSO, I AM NOT SURE IF I UNDERSTOOD OR HEARD YOU RIGHT--WAS THE EMBASSY CONSULTED TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE? DID IT GIVE CLEARANCE TO THE --

A: THE EMBASSY WAS CONSULTED, YES.

Q: YES.

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A: AS I SAID, A LITTLE EARLIER.

Q: BOB, DO WE HAVE A POLICY THAT YOU COULD GIVE US REGARDING PRIVATE ARMS SALES TO THE MIDDLE EAST? I MEAN, WE HAVE A POLICY ON--YOU KNOW--HAWK MISSILES, THAT WE SELL THEM TO PEOPLE WHO WILL USE THEM FOR A "MODERATING" EFFECT. WHY DO WE ALLOW PISTOL SALES TO GO TO LEBANON? IS THIS BECAUSE THEY WOULD BUY THEM SOMEPLACE ELSE, OR IT SERVES MODERATING FORCES, OR WHAT?

A: LET ME FIND OUT, BARRY, IF I CAN ELABORATE ON THAT FOR YOU. I CANNOT GIVE YOU ANY POLICY WITH REGARD TO PRIVATE COMMERCIAL SALES OF THIS NATURE AT THIS TIME.

Q: WHO IS THE DIRECTOR OF MUNITIONS CONTROL, BOARD, OR WHATEVER IT IS, AND WHAT IS HIS NAME?

A: LET ME GET HIS NAME FOR YOU.

Q: BOB, ONE MORE QUESTION ON THE 1,400 PISTOLS. DOES THE PRESENTLY ESTABLISHED, RECOGNIZED AGENT--DOES THAT MEAN THAT HE HAS CARRIED ON DEALS LIKE THIS FOR THE UNITED STATES BEFORE? OR WITH SOME OTHER COUNTRY BEFORE?

A: I CANNOT TELL YOU. I WOULD ASSUME THAT HE MAY HAVE HAD OTHER COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND MAYBE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. I JUST DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT. I WOULD ASSUME THAT HE WOULD.

Q: THANK YOU, BOB.

A: O.K. KISSINGER

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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